WOOD.

RESCUED!

W. WOOD

WE HAD BEEN IN CONTINUOUS TOUCH WITH THEM SINCE THEIR SHIP HAD SHOT SKYWARD ALMOST A YEAR PREVIOUS! THEY HAD GONE TO EXAMINE A PLANET IN THE SOLAR SYSTEM OF A NEIGHBORING STAR! ONE OF OUR SCOUT-SHIPS HAD REPORTED THAT IT WAS ALMOST THE SAME SIZE AS EARTH AND HAD LOOKED PROMISING...

WE'RE GOING TO ATTEMPT A LANDING! HERE GOES!

GOOD LUCK, YOU GUYS!

THE POPULATION PROBLEM IN THAT YEAR OF 1985 HAD GROWN TO SERIOUS PROPORTIONS! OUR ONLY SOLUTION WAS COLONIZATION OF ANOTHER PLANET! THE EARTH'S WORLD GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN CARRYING ON SPACE EXPLORATION FOR MANY YEARS! AT LAST WE WERE ON THE VERGE OF A SOLUTION...

WE'RE DOWN! EVERYTHING SEEMS OKAY! WE'RE GETTING INTO OUR SPACE SUITS! PLENTY OF VEGETATION AROUND BUT NO SIGNS OF *INTELLIGENT* LIFE!

WHAT A THRILL IT MUST BE FOR THOSE GUYS! A STRANGE NEW PLANET...

THE OTHER PLANETS OF *OUR* SOLAR SYSTEM HAD ALREADY BEEN EXAMINED! MARS...VENUS...ALL OF THEM! THEY HAD PROVED HOPELESS! OUR ANSWER, WE WERE SURE, WAS ANOTHER SOLAR SYSTEM...

THE ATMOSPHERE HERE SEEMS PRETTY GOOD! I'M SURE WE'LL BE ABLE TO EXIST HERE WITHOUT SPACE-SUITS! WE'RE GETTING OUT NOW! I SEE...

HEY!

THAT WAS WHEN THEIR RADIO HAD GONE DEAD! THAT WAS THE LAST MESSAGE WE HAD RECEIVED FROM THEM...

GIVE 'EM TIME! PERHAPS A TUBE BLEW!

PERHAPS... ONLY...

WE HAD GIVEN THEM TIME! THREE MONTHS! BUT WE NEVER HEARD FROM THEM! THEN, THE GOVERNMENT HAD ASKED FOR VOLUNTEERS...FOR A RESCUE TEAM TO GO AFTER THEM! I, KEN ATKENSON, HAD VOLUNTEERED.

GOOD LUCK, GENTLEMEN!

THANK YOU, MR. PRESIDENT!

AND SO, A SECOND SHIP HAD TAKEN OFF! AND I WAS IN IT! NOW WE WERE SPEEDING SKYWARD...ON A TRIP THAT WOULD TAKE US A YEAR OR MORE...BOUND FOR A PLANET IN A SOLAR SYSTEM OF A NEIGHBORING STAR...

DO YOU THINK WE'LL FIND THEM, CAPTAIN? DO YOU THINK THEY'RE STILL ALIVE!

I DON'T KNOW, KEN! I DON'T KNOW!

OUR SHIP WAS POWERED BY A MAGNETIC-SPACE DRIVE-UNIT! IT WAS THE LATEST DEVELOPMENT IN SPACE TRAVEL...

HOW DOES IT WORK, CAPTAIN?

SIMPLE! EACH STAR, EACH PLANET EMITS MAGNETIC LINES OF FORCE! THESE VARY IN WAVE-LENGTH WITH THE SIZE AND DENSITY OF EACH ASTRAL BODY...

BY TUNING IN ON THE PARTICULAR WAVE-LENGTH OF OUR DESTINATION, WE ARE ABLE TO UTILIZE ITS MAGNETIC FORCE LINES TO POWER AND STEER OUR CRAFT! BY A SIMPLE AMPLIFICATION OF THIS MAGNETIC CURRENT, WE ARE ABLE TO TRAVEL FASTER THAN THE SPEED OF LIGHT!

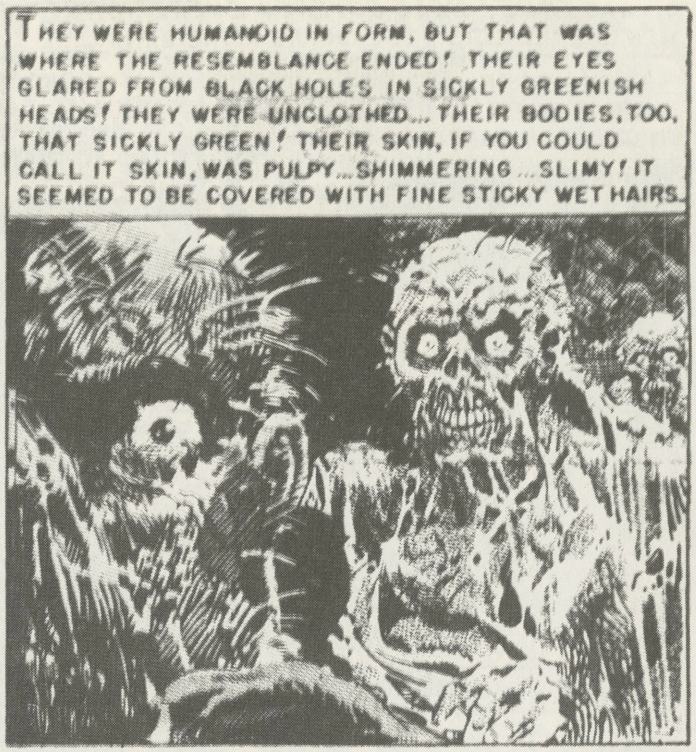
IT WAS GOING TO TAKE US TWENTY MONTHS TO REACH THE PLANET! THAT MEANT THAT THE OCCUPANTS OF THE FIRST SHIP, IF THEY WERE STILL ALIVE, WOULD HAVE BEEN THERE FOR *TWO YEARS*...

WELL, IT'S GOING TO BE A LONG TRIP! CHESS, ANYONE?

AW, SHUT UP!

THE MONTHS PASSED AND OUR DESTINATION GREW NEARER AND NEARER! THEN...ONE DAY...
THERE SHE IS... ON OUR TELE-SCREEN!
GREEN! IT'S A GREEN PLANET LIKE EARTH!
YES! THAT'S WHY THE SCOUT-SHIP REPORTED IT! IT LOOKS VERY MUCH LIKE EARTH TOO, EXCEPT FOR THE LAND FORMATIONS!
ENTERING OUTER ATMOSPHERE, CAPTAIN!
THE LINES OF FORCE GUIDED US STRAIGHT TOWARD THE PLANET'S SURFACE! WE SPED ACROSS ITS UNFAMILIAR TERRAIN...
VEGETATION...LAKES... RIVERS...MOUNTAINS! IT IS SO LIKE EARTH... AND YET...
YET...IT LOOKS... DIFFERENT!
SUDDENLY I SAW IT! STANDING IN A CLEARING...
LOOK, CAPTAIN! THE OTHER SHIP!
YOU'RE RIGHT, KEN! SWITCH ON ROCKET JETS! PREPARE FOR LANDING...
WE TURNED SLOWLY AND NOSED UP OVER ANOTHER CLEARING SOME DISTANCE FROM THE OTHER SPACE-SHIP! THEN WE SLIPPED, TAIL-END FIRST, TOWARD THE SURFACE OF THE STRANGE PLANET...SHORT ROCKET BURSTS SLOWING OUR DESCENT...
WE BUMPED TO A STOP! WE WERE DOWN! IN A MATTER OF MINUTES WE WOULD KNOW...
LET'S GET INTO SPACE-SUITS, JUST IN CASE!
GOOD IDEA!
WE ALL DRESSED IN OUR PLASTIC, TEMPERATURE-CONTROLLED SPACE SUITS! WE CLIMBED FROM THE SHIP...GUNS DRAWN...
WHAT THE...?
LOOK!
GOOD LORD!

THEY CAME AT US! THEY BURST FROM THE VEGETATION SURROUNDING THE CLEARING AND RUSHED US! THEIR HOARSE SHRIEKING SENT A COLD SHUDDER DOWN MY SPINE...
MONSTERS...
ATTACKING!
LORD! HOW UGLY...

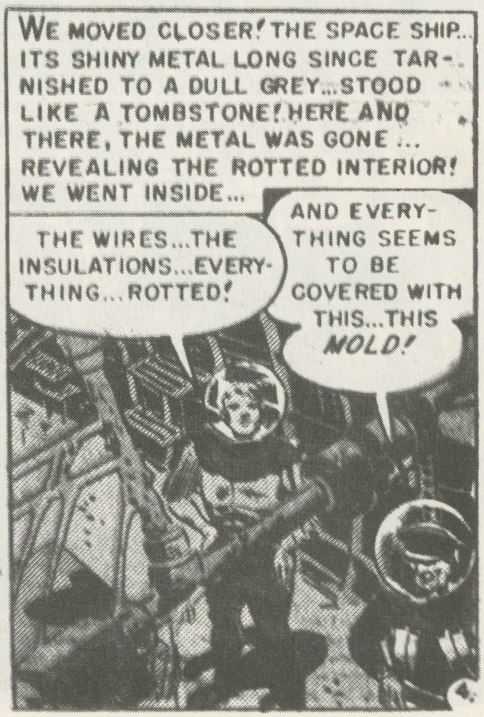

THEY WERE HUMANOID IN FORM, BUT THAT WAS WHERE THE RESEMBLANCE ENDED! THEIR EYES GLARED FROM BLACK HOLES IN SICKLY GREENISH HEADS! THEY WERE UNCLOTHED... THEIR BODIES, TOO, THAT SICKLY GREEN! THEIR SKIN, IF YOU COULD CALL IT SKIN, WAS PULPY... SHIMMERING... SLIMY! IT SEEMED TO BE COVERED WITH FINE STICKY WET HAIRS.

WE BLASTED THEM...

KILLED THEM ALL...
I WONDER IF THESE... MONSTERS... GOT THE OTHERS?

WE LEFT THE SICKENING CORPSES AND MADE OUR WAY IN THE GENERAL DIRECTION OF THE SPACE SHIP WE HAD SPOTTED FROM THE AIR...
ON YOUR GUARD, MEN! WE MAY RUN INTO MORE OF THOSE CREATURES!

WE CAME TO THE EDGE OF A CLEARING! THE SHIP WAS THERE, STANDING TALL AND STRAIGHT...
LOOK! IT'S ALL ROTTED... RUSTED... EATEN AWAY!
NO SIGNS OF LIFE!


WE MOVED CLOSER! THE SPACE SHIP... ITS SHINY METAL LONG SINCE TARNISHED TO A DULL GREY... STOOD LIKE A TOMBSTONE! HERE AND THERE, THE METAL WAS GONE... REVEALING THE ROTTED INTERIOR! WE WENT INSIDE...
THE WIRES... THE INSULATIONS... EVERYTHING... ROTTED!
AND EVERYTHING SEEMS TO BE COVERED WITH THIS... THIS MOLD!

IT WAS *TRUE! MOLD COVERED EVERYTHING!* THE INSTRUMENTS... THE COTS... THE CHAIRS... THE WIRING...

LOOK! THEIR SPACE-SUITS!

ROTTED AND TORN!

I'M AFRAID, GENTLEMEN, THAT THE FIRST EXPEDITION HAS BEEN WIPED OUT BY *THOSE MONSTERS...*

LET'S GO BACK TO OUR SHIP BEFORE *MORE* OF THEM SHOW UP!

WE MADE OUR WAY BACK TO OUR OWN SHIP, SKIRTING THE CLEARING TO AVOID THE CORPSES OF THOSE HORRIBLE CREATURES! WE CLIMBED IN THE OPEN DOOR...

WE'LL START BACK AT ONCE! RADIO EARTH, KEN! TELL THEM THE FIRST EXPEDITION WAS ANNIHILATED BY THE CREATURES THAT INHABIT THE PLANET AND THAT THE AIR IS CONTAMINATED WITH SPORES THAT COVER EVERYTHING WITH MOLD!

YES, SIR! AT ONCE!

I FLICKED THE SWITCHES TO TURN OUR TRANSMITTER ON! THERE WAS NO RESPONSE! THE RADIO...

CAPTAIN! THE RADIO! IT'S *DEAD!*

WHAT?

I LOOKED ABOUT! THE MOLD... THE GREY MOLD HAD STRIPPED THE WIRES OF THEIR INSULATION...

IT'S THE MOLD, CAPTAIN! IT'S RUINED THE WIRING!

PREPARE FOR TAKE OFF!

THE POWER WAS TURNED ON! NOTHING HAPPENED! THE REALIZATION CAME TO US...

THE MOLD! IT'S DESTROYED THE IGNITION SYSTEM!

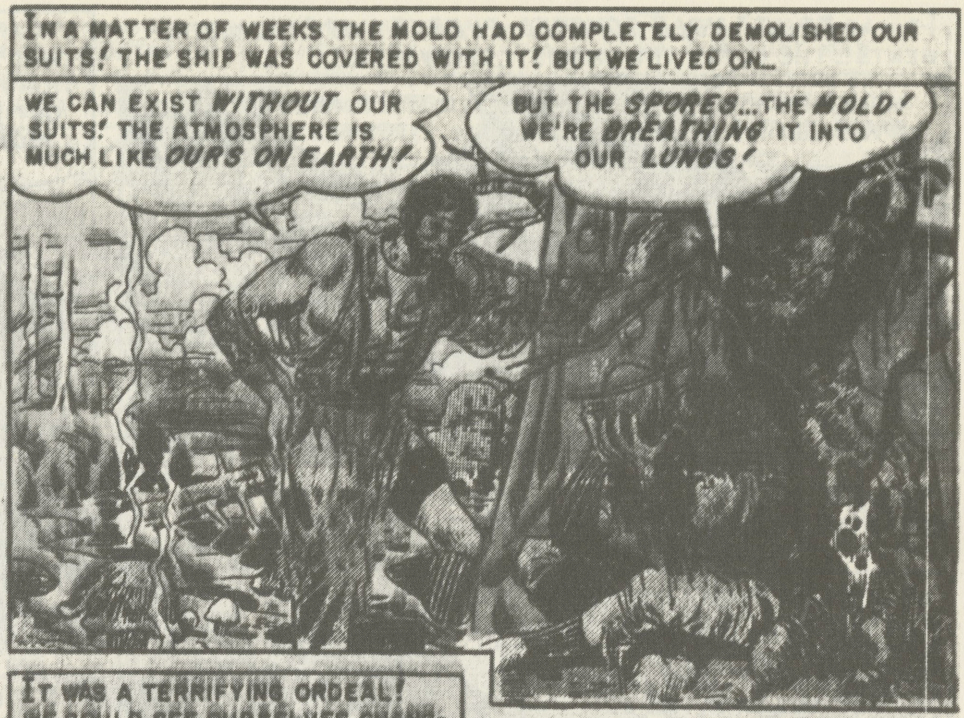
BOLT THE DOOR! WE'LL HAVE TO REPAIR IT!

WE BEGAN TO WORK FEVERISHLY! THE MOLD GREW FAST! IT ROTTED THE WIRES FASTER THAN WE COULD REPAIR THEM! WE WERE TRAPPED...

THE SHIP! THE METAL'S BEEN EATEN THROUGH!

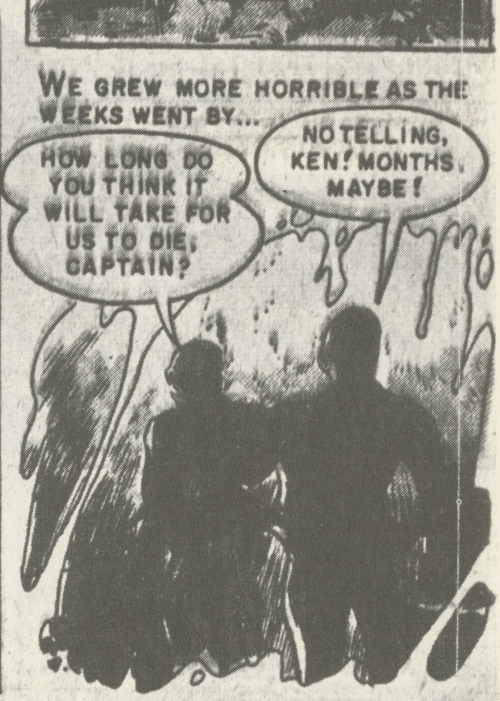
WE'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO BEAT THE MOLD, NOW!

WE GAVE IT UP! WE WERE LICKED! THEN... A MORE GHASTLY THING BEGAN TO HAPPEN...
KEN! YOUR SPACE SUIT! IT'S ROTTING AWAY!
THE MOLD HAS GOTTEN TO THAT, TOO...

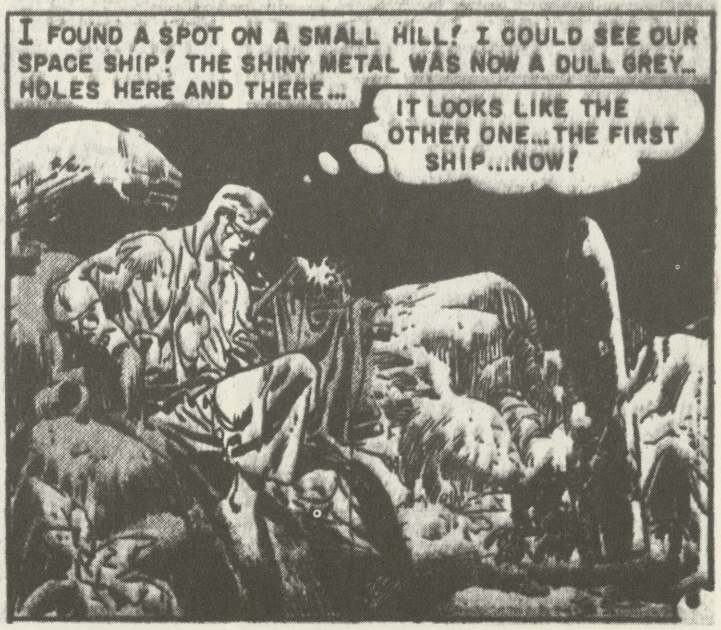

IN A MATTER OF WEEKS THE MOLD HAD COMPLETELY DEMOLISHED OUR SUITS! THE SHIP WAS COVERED WITH IT! BUT WE LIVED ON...
WE CAN EXIST WITHOUT OUR SUITS! THE ATMOSPHERE IS MUCH LIKE OURS ON EARTH!
BUT THE SPORES...THE MOLD! WE'RE BREATHING IT INTO OUR LUNGS!

WE LOOKED AT EACH OTHER! I WAS HORRIFIED! A SMALL PATCH OF GREEN HAD BEGUN TO APPEAR ON THE CAPTAIN'S FACE...
IT'S ATTACKED US, NOW!
LORD HELP US!

IT WAS A TERRIFYING ORDEAL! WE COULD SEE OURSELVES CHANGING EVERY DAY! THE MOLD BEGAN TO COVER OUR BODIES...
IT SEEMS TO BE LIVING ON OUR TISSUES!
AND IT IS UNDOUBTEDLY GROWING INTERNALLY AS WELL!


WE GREW MORE HORRIBLE AS THE WEEKS WENT BY...
HOW LONG DO YOU THINK IT WILL TAKE FOR US TO DIE, CAPTAIN?
NO TELLING, KEN! MONTHS, MAYBE!

BREATHING BECAME MORE DIFFICULT! OUR VOICES WERE GOING! WE SOUNDED HUSKY...WEAK! WE KEPT TALK TO A MINIMUM...
'GENTLEMEN! I SUGGEST... COUGH...WE SPLIT UP...KEEP AWAY FROM EACH OTHER... SO WE CANNOT WATCH THE MOLD DESTROYING US...
YES! IT WOULD BE BEST!


I FOUND A SPOT ON A SMALL HILL! I COULD SEE OUR SPACE SHIP! THE SHINY METAL WAS NOW A DULL GREY... HOLES HERE AND THERE...
IT LOOKS LIKE THE OTHER ONE...THE FIRST SHIP...NOW!

THE MONTHS PASSED, BUT I DID NOT DIE! STRANGELY, MY APPETITE HAD INCREASED! IT SEEMED THAT I WAS FEEDING THE MOLD AS WELL AS MY OWN WRETCHED BODY! THEN ONE DAY, AS I SAT ON MY HILL... WAITING... WAITING...

WHAT... WHAT'S THAT?

A SOUND LIKE ROCKET MOTORS...

A *SPACE-SHIP!* IT'S COMING TO *RESCUE* US!

I RUSHED DOWN THE HILL... CALLING FOR THE OTHERS! IT WAS THE FIRST TIME I HAD USED MY VOICE IN MONTHS! IT STARTLED ME! IT WAS HOARSE... UNINTELLIGIBLE...

G-Y-A-A-A-G-G-H-H-H!

AND THEN I SAW THE OTHERS! I HAD GOTTEN SO USED TO MYSELF THAT I HADN'T REALIZED HOW *REVOLTING* WE HAD BECOME! THEIR EYES GLOWED FROM BLACK SOCKETS... THEIR HEADS... SICKLY GREENISH... PULPY... SHIMMERING... SLIMY...

THE SHIP WAS DOWN, NOW! WE RUSHED TOWARDS IT... HAPPILY...

THEY SAW US COMING! THEIR EYES WERE WIDE IN HORROR! THEY BEGAN TO FIRE AT US...

BRRRT

AT TA-AT TAT

TAC TAC

AS THE BULLETS RIPPED INTO ME... AND I PITCHED FORWARD, BLEEDING... EVERYTHING SUDDENLY BECAME CLEAR! *I* WAS A *MONSTER*... THE *SAME* KIND THAT HAD ATTACKED *US* WHEN *WE* LANDED! AS THE BLACKNESS CLOSED IN, I REALIZED THAT *WE* HAD KILLED THE MEMBERS OF THE FIRST EXPEDITION... JUST AS THE NEWCOMERS WERE... KILLING... US...

THE END

IT WAS A CHANCE ENCOUNTER IN SPACE, WHICH COULD ONLY END IN...

DEADLOCK!

CAPTAIN!

WOOD

THEY HAD BEEN TRAVELING FOR TWO YEARS, ONE MONTH, AND TEN DAYS WHEN THEY FIRST SAW THE OTHER SPACE-SHIP...

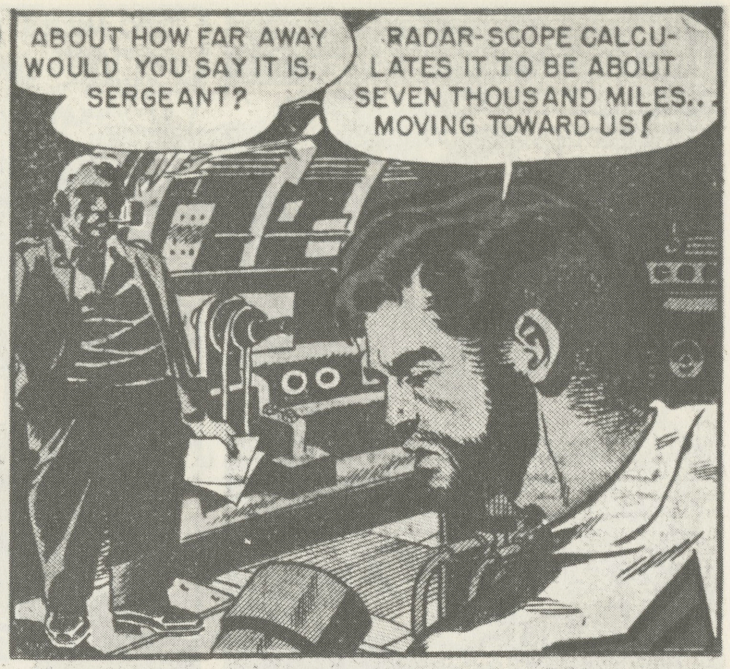
LOOK, CAPTAIN! ON OUR ASTRO-RADAR SCREEN! A *STRANGE LOOKING CRAFT!*

WHAT? IMPOSSIBLE!

THERE ARE NO OTHER SPACE-SHIPS FROM EARTH IN THIS PART OF THE GALAXY!

IT DOES NOT LOOK LIKE ONE OF OURS! IT SEEMS TO BE MADE OF A QUEER METALIC SUBSTANCE! NOTICE HOW IT **GLOWS!**

BUT...WHERE CAN IT COME FROM? WE KNOW OF *NO OTHER* CIVILIZATION IN THIS GALAXY, EXCEPT *OURS* ON *EARTH!*
PERHAPS IT IS FROM *ANOTHER* GALAXY! ONE WE HAVE NOT, AS YET, EXPLORED!


ABOUT HOW FAR AWAY WOULD YOU SAY IT IS, SERGEANT?
RADAR-SCOPE CALCULATES IT TO BE ABOUT SEVEN THOUSAND MILES... MOVING TOWARD US!

STOP OUR SHIP! WE'LL WAIT FOR IT TO GET CLOSER!
CUT ENERGIZING JETS! WE'RE STOPPING THE SHIP!
RIGHT!

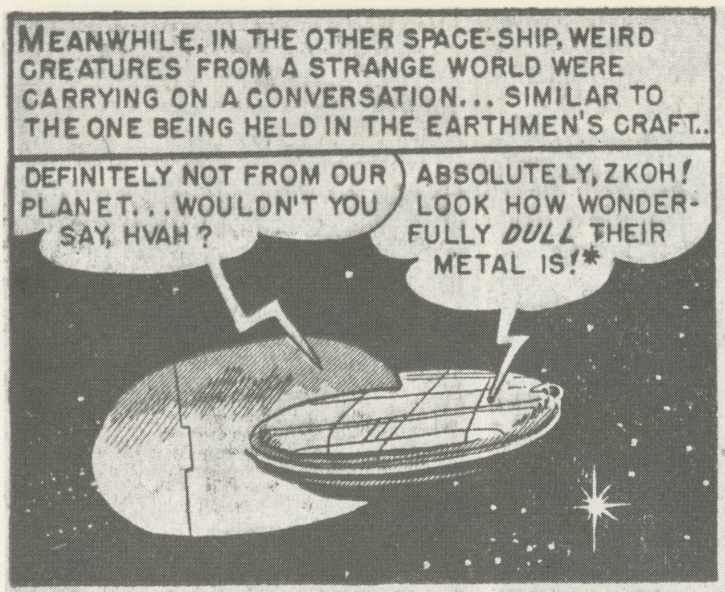
THE SLEEK SPACE-SHIP FROM EARTH SLOWED TO A STOP! IT HUNG IN THE VELVETY BLACKNESS OF SPACE SILENTLY... WAITING...
HOW FAR *NOW*, SERGEANT?
FOUR HUNDRED MILES, SIR! *SHE'S STOPPED, TOO!*

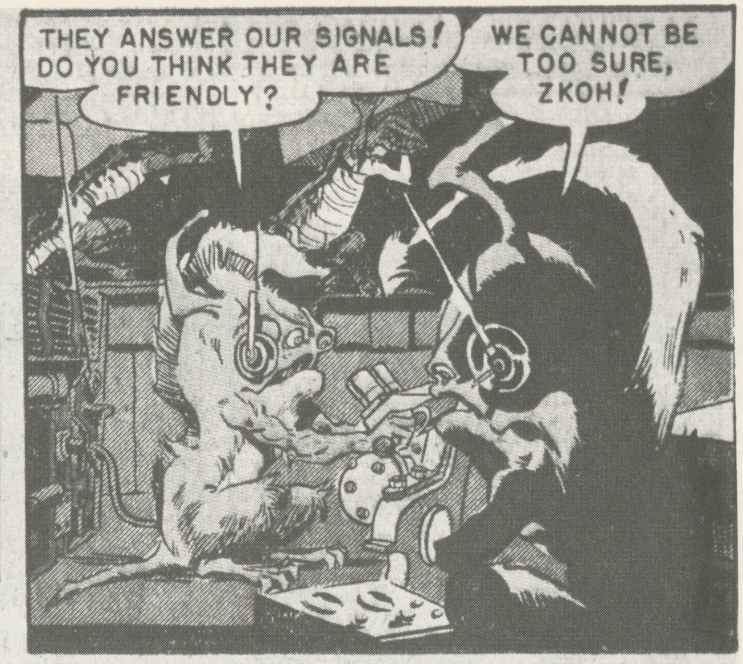
H-M-M-M-M! THEY'RE AS LEERY OF *US* AS *WE* ARE OF *THEM!*
WONDER WHAT THEY *LOOK* LIKE?

NO TELLING! *LIFE* CAN TAKE *MANY FORMS! LIQUID...GASEOUS... ANYTHING!*
UGH! CUT IT OUT! YOU MAKE ME *SHUDDER!*

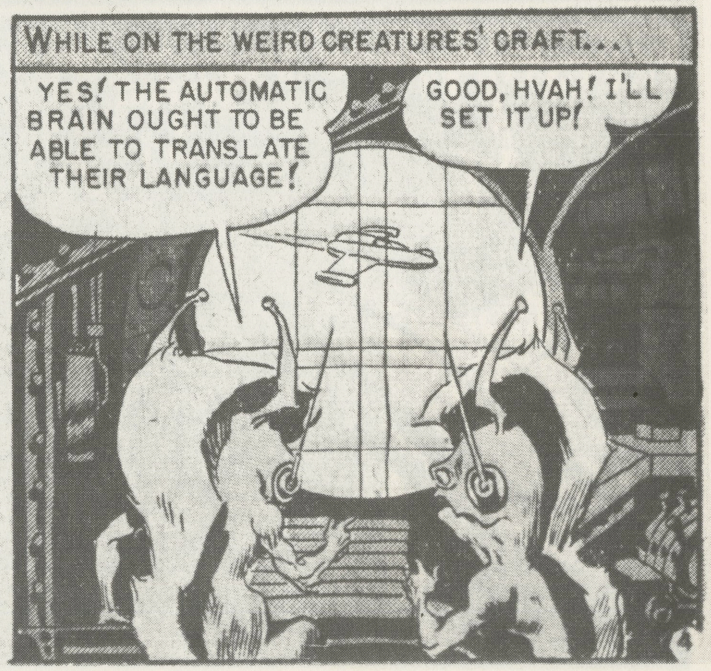
CAPTAIN! ALIEN SHIP *MOVING TOWARD US AGAIN... SLOWLY!*
OKAY! WE'LL DO THE SAME! START THE ENERGIZERS!

THE TWO SPACE SHIPS MOVED SLOWLY, CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN THEM...
FIFTY MILES, SIR! STILL COMING AT US!
HOLD HER ON COURSE, SERGEANT! WE'LL CALL HER BLUFF!
TWO MILES, CAPTAIN! SHE'S STOPPING!
GOOD! THIS IS CLOSE ENOUGH! STOP OUR SHIP ALSO!
NOW, WHAT DO WE DO?
WAIT, I GUESS! SEE WHAT THEY DO!
SHE'S DEFINITELY NOT FROM EARTH, SIR! SHE SEEMS TO EMPLOY A DIFFERENT POWER PRINCIPLE THAN WE DO!
UGLY SHAPE, TOO! AND YET...IT COULD BE A MORE EFFICIENT SHAPE! I WONDER!
PICKING UP RADIO SIGNALS, SIR! SHE'S TRYING TO CONTACT US!
DO THEY MAKE SENSE?
JUMBLED BLEEPS! THAT'S ABOUT ALL!
SEND OUT A FEW SIGNALS ON THE SAME WAVE-LENGTH, SERGEANT!
SHE'S ANSWERING, SIR! I BEEPED HER TWICE...AND SHE RETURNED TWO! SHALL I HOOK UP THE MIKE?
YES! I'LL TALK TO THEM!



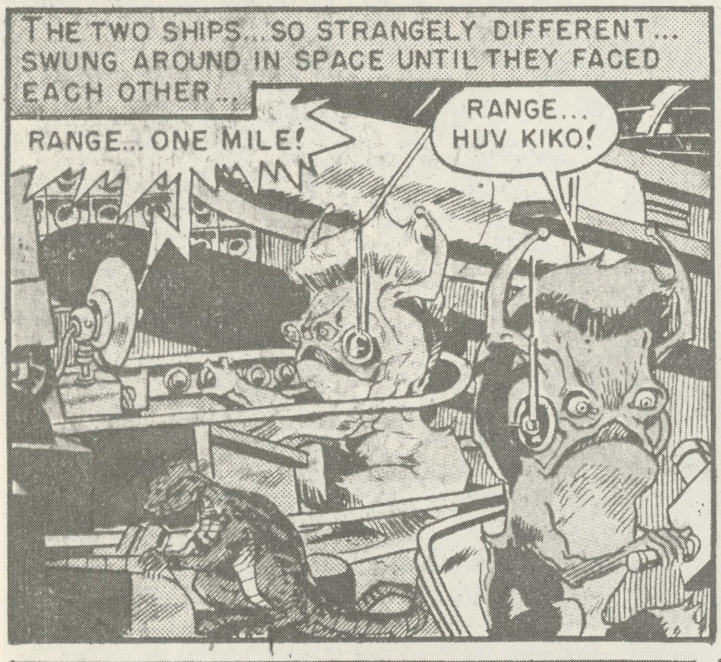


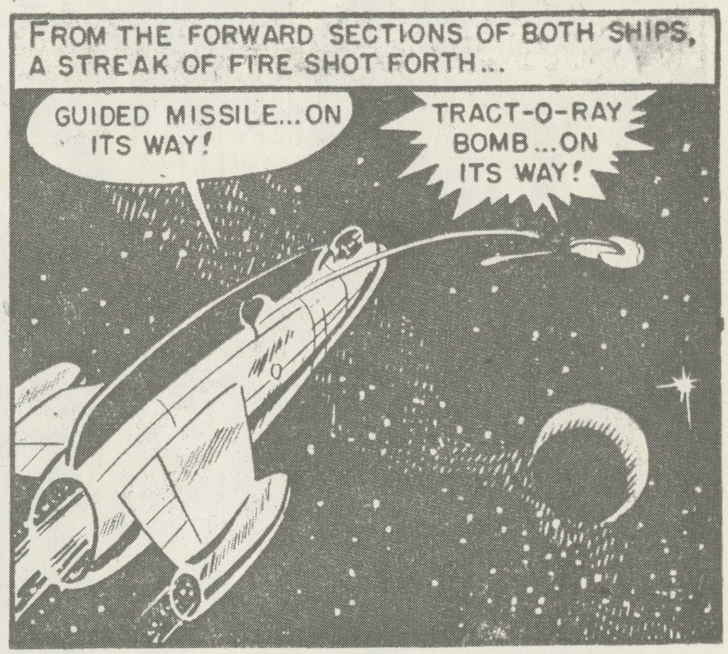
* EDITORS' NOTE: THIS IS A ROUGH TRANSLATION, YOU UNDERSTAND! THEY ARE, OF COURSE, CONVERSING IN THEIR OWN TONGUE!

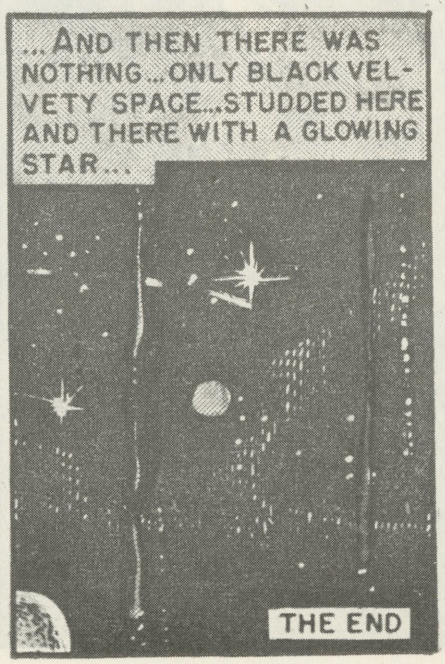


WITH THE AID OF THEIR RESPECTIVE AUTOMATIC-BRAIN-MACHINES, CONVERSATIONS WERE BEGUN BETWEEN THE TWO SPACE-SHIPS...
NO, I'M AFRAID WE CANNOT TELL YOU WHERE WE ARE FROM! HOW DO WE KNOW YOU DO NOT WANT TO DESTROY US?
WELL, THE SAME FEELING GOES HERE, CHUM! WE CAN'T TRUST YOU EITHER!
THEN BE ON YOUR WAY!
OH, NO! YOU FIRST! WE DON'T WANT TO BE FOLLOWED BACK TO OUR HOME PLANET!
WELL, NEITHER DO WE! WHAT NOW?
LOOKS LIKE THERE'S ONLY ONE THING TO DO, GUYS!
YES! IT IS OBVIOUS! ONE OF US MUST BE DESTROYED BY THE OTHER... FOR THE SAFETY OR OUR MOTHER CIVILIZATIONS!
LISTEN! UNDERSTAND THIS! WE'RE PEACE-LOVING! WE DON'T WANT THIS! BUT... WELL... HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT YOU'RE LIKE! ONLY YOUR WORD!
AND WE HAVE ONLY YOURS...
YOU MIGHT BE NICE GUYS!
AND YOU MIGHT BE ALSO!
BUT WE CAN'T RISK IT!
YES! IT IS TOO BAD!

*AGAIN, ONLY A ROUGH TRANSLATION! ED.







WE, THE EDITORS OF *WEIRD FANTASY*, WELCOME YOUR COMMENTS ON OUR MAGAZINE! TELL US WHAT YOU *LIKE* OR *DISLIKE* AND *WHICH STORY* YOU *LIKE BEST!* YOUR LETTERS *HELP US* TO GIVE *YOU* THE KIND OF MAG YOU *WANT!*

ADDRESS MAIL TO:
THE EDITORS,
WEIRD FANTASY
ROOM 706, DEPT. 17
225 LAFAYETTE ST.
N.Y.C., 12, N.Y.

THE ENEMIES OF THE COLONY

THE *G.C.A.* (GALACTIC COLONIZATION AUTHORITY) ROCKET-SHIP, R-2, BUMPED GENTLY TO REST ON THE FRIENDLY SURFACE OF THE STRANGE PLANET! AS THE DUST AND ROCKET-FUEL EXHAUST DRIFTED AWAY, A TINY PORT IN THE MONSTROUS GLEAMING HULL SLID OPEN...

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN! THE PLANET WE HAVE TRAVELED SEVEN YEARS TO REACH! OUR *NEW HOME*...

A BUTTON WAS PRESSED, AND SOMEWHERE INSIDE THE SHIP A MOTOR STARTED! A SLIT APPEARED IN THE SIDE OF THE GIGANTIC CRAFT AND A LADDER PROJECTED ITSELF! EAGER FEET SCURRIED DOWN! LAUGHING CHILDREN... SMILING WOMEN... GRIM-FACED MEN...

WELCOME! WELCOME TO RULLAH! WELCOME... ONE AND ALL!

THE GATHERED MULTITUDE THAT HAD COME TO MEET THE NEW ARRIVERS THRONGED ABOUT THEM... SHOUTING... JOKING! OLD FRIENDS MET! CHILDREN WHO HAD SPENT THEIR WHOLE LIVES IN THE SPACE-SHIP STARED ABOUT... WIDE-EYED...

ATTENTION! ATTENTION! CAPTAIN VORKEY... PLEASE COME TO ADMINISTRATION OFFICE! CAPTAIN VORKEY...

CAPTAIN JOHN VORKEY STRODE ACROSS THE SMOOTH OPEN AREA THAT SERVED AS THE COLONY OF RULLAH'S ROCKET-PORT, AND ENTERED THE LOW GLASS-WALLED BUILDING MARKED 'ADMINISTRATION'.

AH, CAPTAIN VORKEY! COME IN... COME IN! I SEE YOUR ARRIVAL HAS CREATED QUITE A DEMONSTRATION AMONG THE COLONISTS!

THE OCCUPANTS OF MY SHIP ARE AS JOYOUS TO HAVE ARRIVED AS YOUR COLONISTS ARE TO HAVE THEM, GENERAL MATTSON!

THE GENERAL TURNED FROM THE HAPPY SCENE THAT WAS TAKING PLACE ON THE FIELD, AND MOTIONED CAPTAIN VORKEY TO SIT DOWN...

WELL, VORKEY! IT'S BEEN TEN YEARS SINCE I SAW YOU LAST! DID YOUR FAMILY TAKE THE TRIP WELL?

VERY WELL, SIR! IN FACT, MY FAMILY INCREASED ON THE WAY! MY WIFE GAVE BIRTH TO A SON, THE SIXTH YEAR OUT!

SUDDENLY, AS CAPTAIN VORKEY WAS DESCRIBING THE LONG TRIP FROM EARTH, A SMALL WEIRD ANIMAL DARTED ACROSS THE OFFICE AND INTO HIS LAP...

W...WHAT IN BLAZES?..

OH, DON'T MIND HIM, CAPTAIN! HE'S A *MOKO!* WE FOUND A FEW LIKE HIM WHEN WE FIRST CAME! THEY'RE *QUITE FRIENDLY!*

BUT...

OH, YOU'LL GET USED TO THEIR LOOKS, VORKEY! WE'VE DOMESTICATED THE LITTLE CREATURES... MADE PETS OUT OF THEM! POOR THINGS... THEY WERE ALMOST EXTINCT WHEN WE CAME! THOSE BLASTED HYDRA-FILES WERE KILLING THEM OFF...

HYDRA-FILES? WHAT ARE *THEY?*

ANOTHER NATIVE CREATURE OF RULLAH! VERY *VICIOUS*.. OUR WORST ENEMY! THEY ATTACK...

THE SCREAM OF A SIREN CUT GENERAL MATTSON OFF ABRUPTLY.

WHAT'S *THAT* FOR?

C'MON! NOW YOU'LL GET TO SEE ONE OF OUR *HYDRA-FILE* FRIENDS!

WEEEE

VORKEY AND MATTSON DARTED OUT OF THE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING AS THE THRONGS OF NEWCOMERS AND COLONISTS SCATTERED IN ALL DIRECTIONS...

THERE IT IS!

GOOD LORD!

THE HIDEOUS MONSTER SLITHERED ACROSS THE FIELD TOWARD A SMALL CHILD WHOSE MOTHER HAD FORGOTTEN HIM IN HER TERROR! HE STOOD ROOTED TO THE SPOT CLUTCHING HIS PRECIOUS PET MOKO TO HIS TINY CHEST...

IT'S HEADED FOR THAT KID!

LET'S GO!

THE CHILD SCREAMED! HIS MOKO SQUIRMED FROM HIS ARMS AND DARTED AWAY...

GOOD SHOT, VORKEY!

KA-BLAM

THE BLAST OF THE HYDROGEN DISINTEGRATOR STOPPED THE HYDRA-FILE IN ITS TRACKS, AND IT TOPPLED OVER...DEAD...

ARE THERE MANY OF THESE THINGS ON RULLAH, GENERAL?

NOT TOO MANY, *NOW!*

WE'VE BEEN KILLING THEM OFF, LITTLE BY LITTLE! SAY, THERE'S A HUNTING PARTY GOING OUT TOMORROW! CARE TO GO ALONG?

I'D ENJOY THAT, GENERAL!

THAT NIGHT, AS CAPTAIN VORKEY AND HIS FAMILY UNPACKED IN THEIR NEW HOME...

LOOK, DADDY! LOOK WHAT I HAVE!

WELL! A MOKO! WHERE DID YOU GET IT, JIMMY?

HARVEY MATTSON, THE GENERAL'S SON, GAVE IT TO ME! HE HAS TWENTY-THREE OF THEM! HE'S BREEDING THEM!

AFFECTIONATE LITTLE CREATURES, AREN'T THEY?

JIMMY! TAKE THAT HORRIBLE THING OUT OF THIS HOUSE, IMMEDIATELY!

IT'S ALL RIGHT, CORA! MOKOS ARE HARMLESS! THE COLONISTS KEEP THEM AS PETS!

THE NEXT MORNING, CAPTAIN VORKEY JOINED THE PARTY THAT WAS SETTING FORTH TO HUNT HYDRA-FILES. AS THEY MADE THEIR WAY OVER THE STRANGE TERRAIN...

IT SEEMS THAT THE HYDRA-FILES HAD ALMOST COMPLETELY WIPED OUT THE MOKOS BEFORE WE CAME!

POOR THINGS! YOUR BOY GAVE ONE TO MY OLDEST SON YESTERDAY! HE LOVES IT!

WHEN THE COLONISTS BEGAN TO BREED THE MOKOS, IT SEEMED TO ENRAGE THE HYDRA-FILES! THEY BEGAN TO INVADE THE SETTLEMENT IN SEARCH OF THE LITTLE CREATURES! ONE OF THE COLONISTS WAS KILLED...

SO WE'VE DECIDED TO RID THE PLANET OF THE BLOOD-THIRSTY MONSTERS! THEY... *LOOK, SIR!*

THE MEMBERS OF THE HUNTING PARTY FROZE IN THEIR TRACKS! A HYDRA-FILE, FEASTING ON A MOKO, BARRED THEIR WAY...

IT SEES US!

BLAST IT!

THE HYDRA-FILE HESITATED... DROPPED THE MOKO IT HAD BEEN DEVOURING...AND STARTED TO RETREAT...

IT'S RUNNING AWAY!

THIS WILL STOP IT!

CRACK!

THE HYDROGEN-BLASTER EXPLODED THE HIDEOUS MONSTER TO SMITHEREENS...

BOOM!

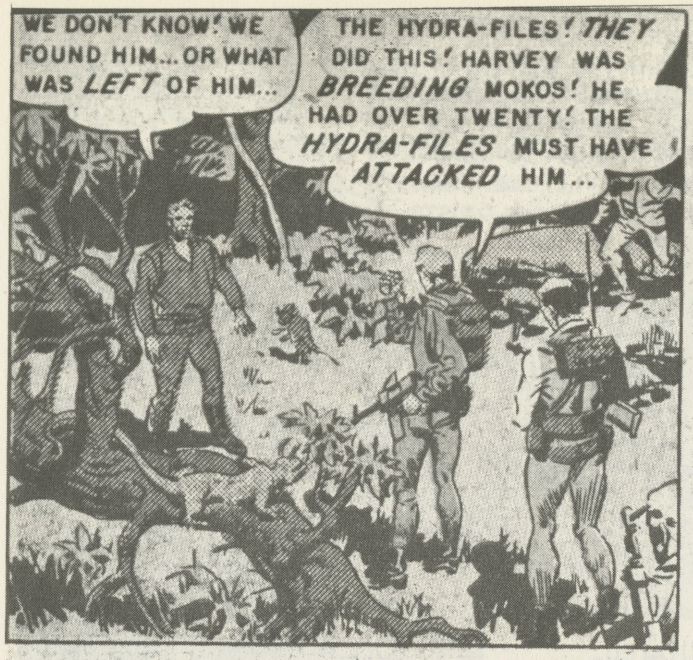
DURING THE REST OF THE HUNTING EXPEDITION, THE COLONISTS TRACKED DOWN AND KILLED FOUR MORE HYDRA-FILES BEFORE THEY RETURNED TO THE SETTLEMENT...

GENERAL MATTSON! GENERAL MATTSON!

WHAT IS IT?

IT'S YOUR *SON*, GENERAL! HE'S BEEN... *KILLED!*

HOW... HOW DID IT HAPPEN?


WE DON'T KNOW! WE FOUND HIM... OR WHAT WAS LEFT OF HIM...
THE HYDRA-FILES! THEY DID THIS! HARVEY WAS BREEDING MOKOS! HE HAD OVER TWENTY! THE HYDRA-FILES MUST HAVE ATTACKED HIM...

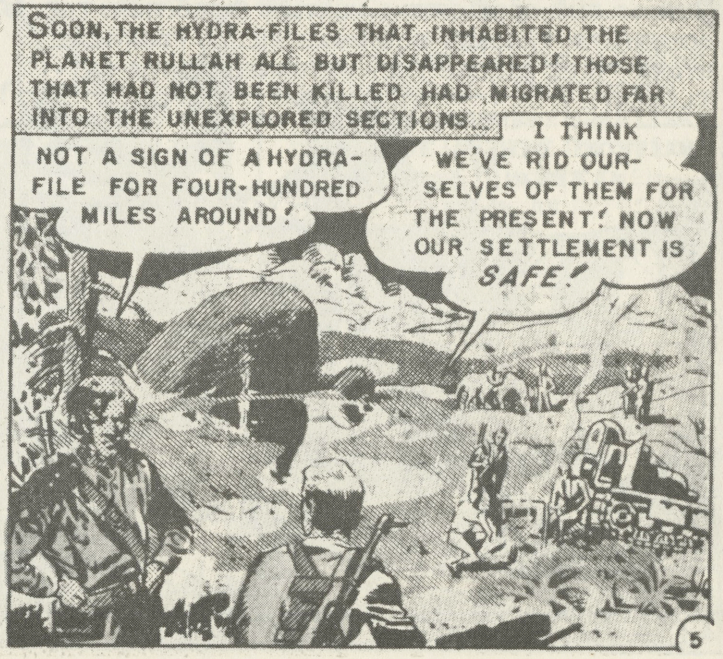
GENERAL MATTSON RETURNED TO HIS HOME TO COMFORT HIS MOURNING WIFE...
LOOK, WALTER! LOOK AT HARVEY'S MOKOS! THEY SENSE SOMETHING! SEE HOW THEY'VE GATHERED AROUND HIS BED?
THEY'RE GRIEVING FOR HIM, DEAR! THEY LOVED HIM SO...

WE'LL HAVE TO GIVE THEM AWAY, NOW!
NO! I'LL KEEP THEM! I'LL TAKE CARE OF THEM! THEY'RE ALL I HAVE... NOW...

GENERAL MATTSON CLENCHED HIS FISTS...
I'LL WIPE THEM OUT! I'LL WIPE OUT EVERY ROTTEN HYDRA-FILE ON THIS WHOLE STINKING PLANET...

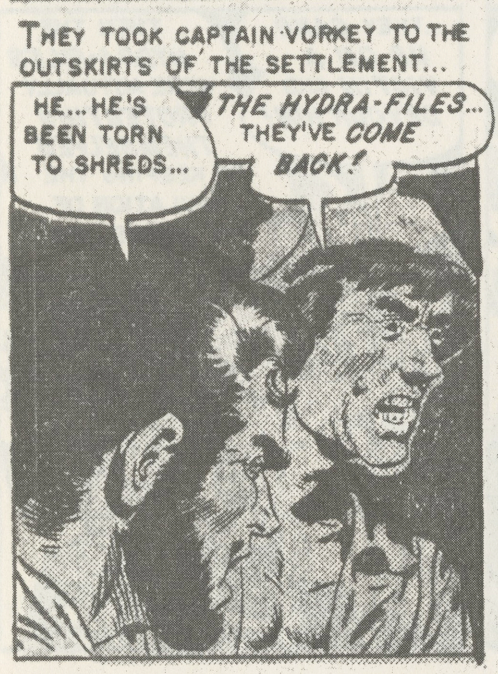
THE WAR WAS ON...
THAT'S NUMBER TEN FOR TODAY...
EEE!

THERE'S ONE!
GET HIM! GET HIM!


SOON, THE HYDRA-FILES THAT INHABITED THE PLANET RULLAH ALL BUT DISAPPEARED! THOSE THAT HAD NOT BEEN KILLED HAD MIGRATED FAR INTO THE UNEXPLORED SECTIONS...
NOT A SIGN OF A HYDRA-FILE FOR FOUR-HUNDRED MILES AROUND!
I THINK WE'VE RID OURSELVES OF THEM FOR THE PRESENT! NOW OUR SETTLEMENT IS SAFE!

AND SAFE THEY WERE! WITH THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE HYDRA-FILES, THE COLONISTS TURNED TO OTHER THINGS ... BUILDING ... IMPROVING! AND THE CHILDREN BRED MOKOS...
I GOT THIRTY-SEVEN NOW! DADDY SAYS THEY'RE MORE PROLIFIC THAN RABBITS, WHATEVER THAT MEANS!
RABBITS WERE EARTH ANIMALS!

THE SETTLEMENT GREW AND FLOURISHED! THE COLONISTS BUILT MORE BUILDINGS AND MORE FACTORIES! AND THE CHILDREN BRED MORE MOKOS...
CAPTAIN VORKEY! WE'VE JUST FOUND YOUR OLDER SON!
WHAT'S HAPPENED TO HIM? YOU'RE WHITE AS A SHEET!


THEY TOOK CAPTAIN VORKEY TO THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE SETTLEMENT...
HE... HE'S BEEN TORN TO SHREDS...
THE HYDRA-FILES... THEY'VE COME BACK!

HUNTING PARTIES WERE FORMED AGAIN... AND THEY WENT FORTH...
NO SIGN OF THEM!
THEN THEY'RE HIDING SOMEWHERE.

ANOTHER COLONIST WAS FOUND... ANOTHER VICTIM...
IT'S HORRIBLE!
LOOK! LOOK HOW HIS POOR LITTLE MOKOS GRIEVE OVER HIS REMAINS..

WHILE A HUNTING PARTY SCOURED THE COUNTRYSIDE...
IT'S NO USE! THERE'S NO SIGN OF A HYDRA-FILE ANYWHERE!
COME! LET'S RETURN! I'M WORRIED ABOUT MY FAMILY!

AS THE GROUP MADE ITS WAY BACK TO THE SETTLEMENT...
LISTEN!
WHAT WAS THAT!
SOUNDED LIKE A SCREAM!

THE HUNTING PARTY RUSHED TO THE SPOT FROM WHERE THE SCREAM HAD COME...

FIFTY OR SIXTY SQUEELING MOKOS WERE SAVAGELY ATTACKING A STRUGGLING, SCREAMING COLONIST...

AS THE HUNTING PARTY NEARED THE SETTLEMENT, A TERRIFYING DIN REACHED THEIR EARS...THE SQUEELING OF *HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS* OF *HUNGRY MOKOS*... AND THE ANGUISHED CRIES OF DYING COLONISTS...

THE SQUEELING WAS COMING CLOSER NOW! A STAMPEDING MASS OF COUNTLESS MOKOS BORE DOWN UPON THE RETURNING HUNTERS! THE HYDROGEN BLASTERS WERE USELESS! THERE WERE FAR TOO MANY TO STOP...

FLASHBACK 1: WOOD and EC

© 1971 by William M. Gaines

DynaPubs